ALMINE RECH

Gesture & Form: Women in Abstraction

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Gesture & Form: Women in Abstraction brings together twenty modern and contemporary artists working within the mode of abstraction. In recent years, greater efforts have been made to remediate the imbalanced presence of women artists in the story of abstract painting, and this exhibition engages in that change by celebrating the formidable contributions of these painting giants, past and present.

Following the Second World War, the center of the art world shifted away from Paris to New York, and alongside this geographical shift came the rise of the Abstract Expressionists. As this movement gained traction, pioneering artists featured in this exhibition drew attention with their paintings full of energetic flashes of color and their physically active means of placing paint to canvas. Artists such as Elaine de Kooning and Helen Frankenthaler, for example, were instrumental to the technical and stylistic developments in this art movement, but were frequently underrepresented in comparison to their male counterparts – and excluded from gallery spaces. *Gesture & Form: Women in Abstraction* encourages viewers to reconsider the legacy of these women and situates their innovations alongside generations of artists working across the globe.

The show highlights the multiplicity that can be found within abstract painting, demonstrating how artists have explored different methods to push the capabilities of the paint medium. With works by Helen Frankenthaler, Vivian Springford, Emily Mason, and Heather Day, viewers will be able to see how the artists activated their bodies to flood canvases with pigment, staining the surfaces with thin layers that swirl over and around each other. These bold washes of color leave traces of their process, and there is a similar effect in the expressive, more gestural works of Elaine de Kooning and Jenny Brosinski, which practically vibrate with movement. Each of these paintings embodies the vigorous motion and spirit of artists at work.

Further investigations of form can be seen in paintings by Mary Ramsden, Gwen O'Neil, Sarah Crowner, and Selma Parlour. Ramsden and O'Neil's works demonstrate their considered technique, where dappled strokes introduce textural elements. In contrast to the lyrical forms in O'Neil's work, Sarah Crowner's and Selma Parlour's paintings present geometric compositions that sharply contrast shapes and hues, drawing the viewer's eye around the image.

Beyond exploring material, color and method, this group of artists has also taken inspiration from the world around them. Sasha Ferré and Jemima Murphy reference nature and organic forms in their work, while Minjung Kim and Tia-Thuy Nguyen draw on aspects of their personal identity to incorporate traditional art forms from their respective cultures. Thu-Van Tran's work is also informed by her heritage, and like Sylvie Fleury and Sylvia Ong, her practice intersects with other visual media and artistic forms to plumb wider societal issues.

Now, at a time when figurative art is the trend, *Gesture & Form: Women in Abstraction* highlights artists who are, at once, continuing to challenge norms while forging careers within a rich and vibrant tradition.

— Ferren Gipson, art historian, writer, and textile artist